# Nikita KHRUSHCHEV: Life and Destiny

HISTORIANS, WRITERS AND MEMBERS OF THE LATE SOVIET LEADER'S FAMILY REMINISCE ABOUT THIS REMARKABLE PERSONALITY AND LOOK BACK ON "KHRUSHCHEV'S DECADE," WHICH HAS NOW COME TO BE SEEN AS A SORT OF PRELUDE TO PERESTROIKA

WRITING ON PERESTROIKA

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# Nikita KHRUSHCHEV: Life and Destiny

*Historians, writers and members of the late Soviet leader's family reminisce about this remarkable personality and look back on "Khrushchev's decade," which has now come to be seen as a sort of prelude to perestroika*

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Социалистическая
ИНДУСТРИЯ

**Oleg VOLOBUYEV,**
D.Sc. (History)

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D.Sc. (History)

Public opinion has two almost diametrically opposed views of Nikita Khrushchev: the attitude to him is often either distinctly negative or very positive. For more than twenty years he has been a taboo subject. His name was hardly mentioned. No objective assessment was made of the activities of the third successive leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
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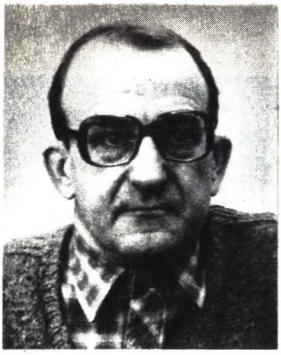
Труд



**Yuri AKSYUTIN,**
Cand.Sc. (History)

Already stripped of his power, Khrushchev began to regret that de-Stalinisation had proceeded too slowly, too timidly, that major gaps had been allowed to remain in Soviet history.
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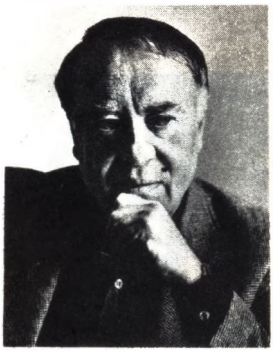
Знамя



**Alexei ADZHUBEY,**
journalist

America liked Khrushchev. Because he was both honest and bold in formulating the complex problems of the present-day world, because he was sociable and capable of understanding an interlocutor and his mood: if it was serious, let it be serious; if it was a joke, let it be a joke; if it was with drive, let it be with drive.
pp. 19-27

Дружба народов

**Anatoli STRELYANY,**
writer

He could not deceive himself. So long as his country produced only one third of the meat produced in the US, Khrushchev could not but worry about the prestige of socialism in the world. He looked at the bottom of things.
pp. 28-37

ИЗВЕСТИЯ

**Gennadi VORONOV,**
former member of the Politbureau of the CPSU Central Committee

Today it is clear that the purpose of Khrushchev's replacement was not to correct mistakes, not to follow the line of the 20th Party Congress more closely, but to seize power in order to turn off that road.
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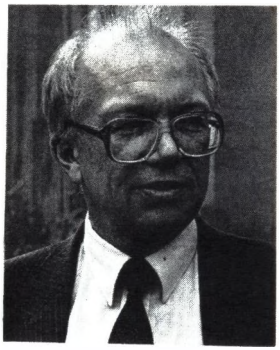

**Sergei KHRUSHCHEV,**
D.Sc. (Technology)

The yes-men always supported everything he said, expressing their delighted approval and doing everything possible to convince him that it was he who knew the ultimate truth. Keeping a level head and that measure of self-criticism so vital for a politician is not easy in such conditions.
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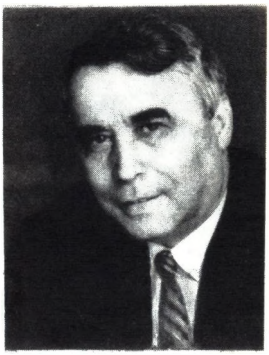

**Fyodor BURLATSKY,**
D.Sc. (Philosophy)

Khrushchev's haste and striving to interfere in any problem and resolve it quickly affected his relations with the intelligentsia. Here, as often as not, he was putty in the hands of his far-from-disinterested advisers and even of his secret opponents who prepared his downfall.
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Социалистическая
ИНДУСТРИЯ

*Sotsialisticheskaya Industria* is a daily newspaper of the CPSU Central Committee. Founded in July 1969. Circulation—1.2 million copies.

**Oleg VOLOBUYEV,**
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**Sergei KULESHOV,**
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# Two Colours of Time

Public opinion has two almost diametrically opposed views of Nikita Khrushchev: the attitude to him is often either distinctly negative or very positive. For more than twenty years he has been a taboo subject. His name was hardly mentioned. No objective assessment was made of the activities of the third successive leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Even his funeral was a strictly family affair. He was buried in Moscow's Novodevichye cemetery without any official ceremonies or condolences. Brezhnev had no room for Khrushchev in his reminiscences, as if the more than ten years of the country's and the Party's history linked with the name of this First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee had never existed.

So Khrushchev and his "decade" are remembered in different ways. Those whom he freed from the inferno of prison life, from labour camps or exile, those who had the good names of their parents and relatives restored, not only speak of him with gratitude, but as often as not get together on his birthday or bring flowers to the monument in Novodevichye cemetery. Those who are today working for perestroika, who have all their lives realised the need for change, think of the

second half of the 1950s and the early 1960s as a time when the movement for the renewal of society first began, as a time of unfulfilled hopes. To the people who have retained their faith in what they were taught in the 1930s and 1940s, Khrushchev is a hated wrecker and destroyer of nearly sacred ideals. Many think of Khrushchev as a leader of the Party and state of questionable leadership abilities, as a leader who compromised himself by making endless promises, starting an all-out campaign for planting maize, confiscating cattle from collective farmers, and many other poorly-thought-out measures.

The Sovietologist Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, turning to the subject of Khrushchev's personality, observes that Stalin's successors, having given Khrushchev the post of Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, considered him a "boor" and a "clumsy oaf." Actually, however, he turned out to be a tremendous enigma. For ten years he ruled a great state, all the time having the reputation of being "Ivan the fool,"* but with the head of a "brilliantly talented peasant." Hidden behind the coarse working-class, peasant, plain and simple appearance of Nikita Khrushchev was a rather complex individual. His energy, boldness, practicality, and generous "peasant nature" appealed to many.

Khrushchev started working at an early age. From 14 on he worked at several factories and coal mines in Donbas area. He often recalled his working youth and, apparently, not without pleasure. In 1918 Khrushchev joined the Bolshevik Party and took part in the Civil War. After the war was over, he became involved in economic and Party activities. In 1925 he was named secretary of a district Party Committee and in 1927 joined the staff of the Stalino (now Donetsk) Regional Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Ukraine. It was from the Ukraine that he was elected a delegate to the 14th and 15th Congresses of the All-Union Communist Party (B). In 1929 he entered the Industrial Academy and later was nominated for leading Party work (he was the secretary of several district Party Committees in Moscow and, later, of the Moscow City Party Committee). At the 17th Congress of the AUCP(B) held in 1934 Khrushchev was elected a member of the Central Committee, and beginning in 1935 he headed the Moscow City and Regional Party

* "Ivan the fool" is a Russian fairytale character —*Ed.*

Organisations as First Secretary. For nearly ten years, from 1938 to 1949, with a short interval in 1947, Khrushchev was First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Ukraine. He was made a member of the Politbureau of the Central Committee in 1939.

During the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) Khrushchev was a member of the Military Councils of the Southwestern sector, the Southwestern, Stalingrad, South, Voronezh, and 1st Ukrainian fronts. He ended the war with the rank of Lieutenant General. In 1976 the writer Konstantin Simonov, who was staying in the same hospital with Marshal Alexander Vasilevsky, wrote down the Marshal's assessment of Khrushchev: "Khrushchev was an energetic and brave man, he always was among the troops, never spent too much time at headquarters or command posts, sought to see people and talk with them, and, it must be said, people liked him."

The shaping of the future First Secretary's personality, therefore, took place in the stormy 1920s and his formation as a political leader occurred in the Stalinist 1930s. Both decades left their imprints on him. Khrushchev belonged to the generation born of the 1917 Socialist Revolution. As for many other sons of workers and peasants, the Revolution opened to him—a fitter, a working man—the road to a life filled with the supreme significance of building a new, socialist society hitherto unknown on Earth. He received his political schooling in the Civil War and the 1920s. They polished his native wit, taught him to be independent and make bold decisions and shaped his world view. The 1930s and 1940s taught him, on the one hand, to do things on a large scale, to run people and things, and to use power, and, on the other, to worship power, to run an office by orders and decrees, and to remove danger by concealing his true worth, his real thoughts and feelings.

Stalin's death freed him, like the rest of the Politbureau members, from the fear for his life. Lying ahead was the struggle for supreme power in which he—then not even First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee—was destined to win. Khrushchev was the initiator and organiser of Beria's arrest. He managed to win over the other members of the Presidium* to his side and to convince Malenkov, the then

* The Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee was the name given in 1952-1966 to the Politbureau, the leading Party body elected by the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee to direct the latter's work between such meetings.

Chairman of the Council of Ministers, of the need to carry out the anti-Beria action. Beria's liquidation strengthened Khrushchev's position and in September 1953 he became First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee.

It is said that already after Khrushchev's removal from power he was asked what he regarded as his most considerable achievement. He replied that it was Beria's destruction. Not the exposure of the Stalin personality cult, not the serious improvement in the life of the collective farmers he had begun to introduce, not the "housing revolution" (mass-scale industrial housing construction), but the liquidation of Beria.

Over the course of ten years—until October 1964—Khrushchev, as First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and, beginning in 1958, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, carried out reforms affecting various aspects of Soviet life. In the national economy they were marked by attempts to introduce economic methods of management as opposed to administration by mere injunction and to go over from coercion to taking the workers' material interests into account, from rigid centralisation in the various sectors to organising economic life first and foremost according to the territorial principle. In the social sphere quite a lot was done to improve the people's well-being. The life of collective farmers changed radically, housing construction was launched on a large scale and the minimum pensions were increased. It was during Khrushchev's times that the first attack was launched against the administrative-bureaucratic system. Though it began to totter, it did not collapse; in the end it brought down its prodigal son.

Having attained the post of Party leader, Khrushchev realised that it would be hard to put his new approaches towards international and domestic problems into practice without striking a powerful "blow" against Stalin. It was impossible to reform the country without destroying Stalinism.

Khrushchev's report devoted to criticism of the Stalin personality cult delivered at the closed session of the 20th Congress of the CPSU (February 1956) involved a risk. The First Secretary surely was aware that he would have to fight the Stalinists who had been holding prominent positions in the Party and the state for a long time. As Khrushchev said later, at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU in 1961, the exposure of the Stalin personality cult was the inner moral need and duty of the Party and its leadership.

In itself, Khrushchev's report was not profoundly analytical. It gave a psychological portrait of Stalin as a political leader marked by a lust for power, cruelty, distrust, intolerance, suspiciousness, and vindictiveness. The report cited facts of unjustified repressions, executions of prominent Party and government leaders and the persecution of their families. All that came as a bolt out of the blue for the Soviet public.

The question of which way the country was going to go arose again in less than 18 months after the 20th Congress of the CPSU. The "Stalinist old guard," frightened by the exposure of the personality cult, which was gathering momentum, decided to remove Khrushchev from the post of First Secretary. In June 1957 Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich, having knocked together a mathematical majority, tried to carry out their scheme at a meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee. However, the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee held at the same time supported Nikita Khrushchev. The attempt to present the Party with the accomplished fact of the First Secretary's removal from office by a "palace coup" ended in failure. Significantly, it was the first case since the late 1920s when the opposition was not subjected to reprisals either immediately after its defeat or at a later date.

In Khrushchev's days the Party congresses and the plenary meetings of the Central Committee for the first time after a long intermission seriously discussed such issues as the role, importance and independence of Soviets, the observance of legality, the restoration of the democratic standards of inner-Party life, the turning over of an ever greater number of state functions to public organisations, socialism and individual freedom. These and other issues of democratic development were being put forward as practical problems needing to be resolved.

After the September 1953 Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee devoted to the further development of agriculture a series of social and economic reforms began being implemented. They resulted in the rapid growth of industrial and farm output. The USSR began accounting for nearly one fifth of world industrial production. The first artificial earth satellite was launched in 1957, and in April 1961 the spaceship *Vostok* carrying the first cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, was put into orbit. The Soviet Union ushered in the space age for mankind. Young people enthusiastically re-

sponded to the appeal to help develop the virgin lands. The country saw an upsurge of public spirit similar to that of the 1920s.

Khrushchev, along, evidently, with the other members of the Presidium, was in the grip of simplistic ideas of social processes. Furthermore, his understanding of and feel for real life were insufficient. This is what his decision to declare the building of a communist society within the shortest possible historical period as the country's direct, immediate task was founded upon. Addressing the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, Khrushchev observed that the spontaneous movement of the masses had given rise to utopian theories of a future Golden Age. The representatives of utopian socialism, however, were very unrealistic when it came to mapping out ways to put their ideals into practice. In order to underline the realistic nature of the plan to build a communist society in the main over two decades—an extremely short historical period—a critique of utopian socialism became necessary. Furthermore, the concepts of how to build socialism in many respects resembled Stalin's pronouncements in his treatise *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*. In 1962, a year after a new Party Programme was adopted, the prices of meat, meat products and milk were raised. The following year, 1963, the country experienced serious difficulties with food supplies. Queues for milk and bread appeared. Grain imports were increased. Many factors were to blame, such as the socialisation of privately-owned cattle, cuts in the size of subsidiary household plots, the planning of farm output in the spirit of "food requisitioning,"* which, though it had been condemned many times, continued to flourish, the command-and-administrative system of running collective and state farms, and the lack of interest among workers in raising their incomes because of the shortage of goods. Not everything is clear about this 1963-1964 food crisis because it has still not been analysed either by economists or historians.

In October 1964 a Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee relieved Khrushchev of the duties of First Secretary and member of the Presidium of the CPSU Central

* "Food requisitioning" was a system used by the Soviet state during the Civil War of 1918-1920 for the procurement of farm produce. Under it, peasants were obliged to hand over to the state all surplus grain and other food products (above the prescribed norms) at fixed prices.

Committee. This decision was prepared while Khrushchev was on holiday. Everything came off without a hitch. The people, in particular, the Party cadres, received the news of Khrushchev's resignation—the leader who only recently was being glorified in the press and from rostrums—with calm and even with satisfaction. Continuous reforms had given rise to a sense of uncertainty and instability. As a matter of fact, not only the Party cadres, but also rather broad sections of the Party and the people were not ready for reform. Most of them failed to see the need for radical change. The ideological stereotypes were still strong.

So what remained of "Khrushchev's" abortive reforms? Let us be objective—not so little, in fact. The rural population ceased to be treated as "second-class" citizens. It was with Khrushchev's reforms that its living standards began to climb steadily. Some farmers started living in good houses. They became comfortably off and began wearing city clothes (and, later, in keeping with the latest fashions). The collective farmer received the right to have a passport (which he, as a less than full-fledged citizen, did not have in Stalin's times), and began to feel equal to urban dwellers. Changes in the pension schemes and housing construction were also radical in essence. The end to secret reprisals without trial and the introduction of new judicial legislation and a new penal code were, to a degree, steps towards asserting the norms of socialist legality.

While in retirement, Khrushchev began working on his memoirs, dictating his reminiscences in a tape recorder. He entrusted the tapes to his son. Word of what Khrushchev was doing "leaked" to the "top," arousing concern there. And then a scandal broke out. The undesirable memoirs had been published in the West. When it became clear that Khrushchev had had nothing to do with that publication, it was demanded that he issue a denial. A statement signed by Khrushchev appeared in *Pravda* saying that he had not given his memoirs for publishing either inside or outside the country. As a result of the whole business, Nikita Khrushchev had two heart attacks, and in September 1971 he passed away.

ТРУД

*Trud* is a daily newspaper published by the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. Founded in February 1921. Circulation—19.6 million copies.

**Yuri AKSYUTIN,**
Cand. Sc. (History)

# Khrushchev Against Stalin

The July 1955 Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee decided to convene the regular 20th Party Congress on February 14, 1956. A number of commissions were set up to prepare for it. There was also another commission working at that time. It was engaged in exonerating persons subjected to unjustified reprisals in previous years. One day, during a regular discussion of its recommendations at a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee, Khrushchev proposed setting up one more commission to investigate Stalin's activities.

It was no surprise to him that the longest-standing members of the Politbureau and the Presidium of the Central Committee, Molotov and Voroshilov (both since 1926), as well as Kaganovich (since 1930) were not enthusiastic about the idea. According to Khrushchev himself, Mikoyan also failed to support him, although he did nothing to block the setting up of the commission. Khrushchev was backed by the young members of the Presidium. And it was Pyotr Pospelov, Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, who was appointed to direct this work.

The commission was set up and began to function. When it

reported the first results to the Presidium of the Central Committee, differences again emerged among the Presidium's members. The revelations were in many ways a surprise to the "young." The old men, of course, knew about much more. Khrushchev was equally knowledgeable, for in the mid-1930s he headed Moscow's Party organisation and was a member of the Central Committee. That meant that at the time of the great "purges," he was at their centre. Nonetheless, Khrushchev insisted that the commission carry on with its work.

Meanwhile, the date of the congress was drawing closer. For the time being, besides the commission itself, only ten members of the Presidium of the Central Committee knew about the results of its work. The discussion of "Stalin's case" was confined to an exchange of views among them behind closed doors. It seemed that they did not feel obliged to do any public "washing to dirty linen" even before the two hundred members and alternate members of the Central Committee, let alone before the 1,436 delegates to the congress.

But thanks to Khrushchev, events took a different course. He proposed that there be an open discussion of Stalin's errors and distortions. Molotov, Voroshilov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich were against it, saying that an open debate might cause a feeling of bitterness and even discontent in the Party ranks and among the rest of the people, would have an unconstructive and negative effect, and would create difficulties for the CPSU and the fraternal Marxist-Leninist parties.

Judging by everything, Khrushchev was in the minority, if not totally isolated as regards this question. The Congress began in a calm atmosphere. And although the delegates gave an enthusiastic reception to the report made by Khrushchev, he himself was not satisfied. As he later admitted, he kept thinking about the horrible facts that had been unearthed by Pospelov's commission. Finally, when he found himself together with the other members of the Presidium of the Central Committee during a break between sessions, he decided to ask them, "Comrades, what are we going to do with Comrade Pospelov's findings?"

He spoke of the need to tell the truth to the Party and of the moral duty to those who, having survived the reprisals, had recently returned from the camps.

After a long discussion everybody agreed that a report "On

the Personality Cult and Its Consequences" should be made to the 20th Congress of the CPSU, only it should be delivered at a closed session. Khrushchev began to read it at the evening session of the Congress on February 24 and continued reading it at the morning session of February 25. The guests, both Soviet and foreign, were absent during the delivery. The delegates were forbidden to make any notes. Khrushchev explained the reason for this in the following way:

"We cannot have this question go outside the Party circles, in particular, leak to the press. That is why we are discussing it here, at a closed session of the Congress. We should know the limits, we should not give our enemies a weapon to fight us with, we should not wash our dirty linen before their eyes."

It is unlikely that he really meant what he was saying. Most probably, judging by subsequent events, it was a concession to those who voiced objections up to the last moment.

Khrushchev, in his day, had heard a good deal about Lenin's political testament, his letter to the 12th Party Congress. It was known that the letter was read out not at the Congress itself, but among its delegations. Khrushchev believed, however, that the contents of his "secret" report should be made known to rank-and-file Party members. Furthermore, he believed that the fraternal parties should also be made familiar with this issue, which, although purely internal, as it were, nevertheless concerned them in no small degree.

And very soon afterwards the heads of the delegations from the fraternal parties were familiarised with the report. How did they react? Reactions varied. Josip Broz Tito already had a copy of the report in late February 1956 and immediately read it to the members of the Executive Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. And, naturally, many delegates to the Congress could not help sharing their impressions, for the report came as a real shock to everybody.

Shortly after that *The New York Times* carried a story about the report by its Moscow correspondent. The next day its main contents were rather accurately reported by Reuters news agency. On March 19-21, a very toned-down summary of the report was carried by the newspaper *l'Humanité* of the French Communist Party. The Yugoslav weekly *Komunist* carried a rather full summary, very close to the original, on March 20.

On March 28, *Pravda* published an editorial entitled "Why the Personality Cult Is Alien to the Spirit of Marxism-

Leninism?" It publicly criticised Stalin for the first time, using, by the way, the same argumentation that had recently been heard during the reading of the secret report.

Thus the whole world came to know of the existence of Khrushchev's secret report within a short period of time. Its full and authentic text, however, had yet to be released. Later, there emerged many people who wanted to take the credit for having "secured" it. At any rate, a copy of it got into the hands of CIA cheif Allen W. Dulles, who passed it on to his brother, Secretary of State John F. Dulles. The latter gave it over for publication. On June 4, the report appeared in *The New York Times* and, on June 6, it was published by *Le Monde*. On June 30, the CPSU Central Committee adopted and, later, published the resolution "On Overcoming the Personality Cult and Its Consequences." The resolution did not contain the horrible facts and ghastly exposures that had filled Khrushchev's secret report to the Congress. Instead, it attempted to answer questions about the causes and nature of the personality cult and its aftermath.

However, to a considerable extent the resolution also tried to play the whole matter down. It contained rather serious reservations that one would find it difficult to agree with nowadays. For instance, it warned that it would be a grave mistake to conclude that the personality cult had caused changes in the USSR's social system. Yet today we openly admit the presence of certain deformations in socialism. It is also stated there that although Stalin's mistakes did inflict damage on society and slow down its development, they never led it away from the correct path of advancement towards communism. Such allegations look utterly unjustified nowadays. Nor can one find any grounds for the buoyant, optimistic statements to the effect that the certain historical conditions that had given rise to the cult were allegedly "a thing of the past." Only enemies could look for the root causes of the cult in the political system itself, in its undemocratic nature. Such slanderous allegations were refuted by the entire history of the Soviet state.

Over 30 years have passed since then. Nikita Khrushchev's secret report on the personality cult has long since become past history. His further destiny reflected the entire inconsistency and irresolution of the policy pursued by the leadership of that time and the struggle between the supporters and opponents of democratisation within it. At the extraordinary

21st Congress of the CPSU in early 1959 the struggle against the personality cult, contrary to the universal expectation, was not carried on further.

And who could have guessed then what a fierce attack against Stalin Khrushchev would launch at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU in October 1961? The second offensive on the cult was mounted in full public view: the mass media reported about it in detail to the entire Party, to the entire population. Besides, Khrushchev was not the only prosecutor. More than 20 speakers described Stalin's various crimes, dwelling in detail on the complicity of Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich and, sometimes, Voroshilov. The openness which marked the speeches at that Congress was not to be seen again for a full quarter of a century.

At the June 1963 Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee devoted to the tasks of Party ideological work, Khrushchev recalled the days of the 20th Congress as if continuing his arguments with his former opponents.

Later, while in retirement and dictating his reminiscences, he resumed his argument, but then already not so much with his former opponents as with the new ones—Brezhnev, Suslov, Podgorny. The reason was that no matter how "quietly" they tried to raise the question of a new reassessment of Stalin, the tendencies the entire leadership was inclined to were apparent enough to many who were closely following the life of society (and Khrushchev remained such a person in retirement, too).

Already stripped of his power, Khrushchev began to regret that de-Stalinisation had proceeded too slowly, too timidly, that major gaps had been allowed to remain in Soviet history, and that the exoneration of the Leninist old guard had not been completed. He viewed the reminiscences he dictated while strolling in the suburban forest, the tapes that were later transcribed and typed by his wife, as the continuation of the old argument, as the defence of his political line before posterity.

ЗНАМЯ

*Znamya* is a literary and socio-political monthly put out by the USSR Writers' Union. Founded in 1931. Circulation—500,000 copies.

**Alexei ADZHUBEY,**
journalist

# Those Ten Years

The visit by the head of the Soviet government to the United States, the first in the history of the relations between the two great countries, became a concrete expression of our resolve not only to declare our aims and intentions, but also to back them up with deeds.

The term "Iron Curtain" appeared during the cold war declared by Sir Winston Churchill in 1946. There is no denying that Western journalists know how to coin scathing terms. Let us leave aside the argument about who drew this curtain between the East and West and for what purpose—it was kept in place by both sides. And then it seemed as if that curtain was beginning to lift and to open to millions of people a world in which human cooperation was manifesting itself more and more actively.

Khrushchev left for the USA on September 14, 1959. The preceding April he celebrated his 65th birthday. Five of those years had been spent solely as First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and another year and a half with the additional post of Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. Khrushchev was full of energy, an energy blended with the energetic efforts that had been launched in

the country. The world press described the invitation to visit the USA as a sensation. And one can appreciate the mood of the person destined to carry out that mission.

America liked Khrushchev. Because he was both honest and bold in formulating the complex problems of the present-day world, because he was sociable and capable of understanding an interlocutor and his mood: if it was serious, let it be serious; if it was a joke, let it be a joke; if it was with drive, let it be with drive.

In the street or at a railway station, in a factory shop or a cafeteria, amidst the splendid scenery of Hollywood or at a formal dinner, everyone he met and every journalist (and there were about five thousand of them following Khrushchev, a record number in those days) discovered in Khrushchev not only and not so much the political leader of a great country, but also an understandable, sincere and emotional man. They believed that he had come with friendly intentions.

Nikita Khrushchev's own account of his trip gives a clearer idea of what happened in America and how. On his return to Moscow he went straight to the Palace of Sports from the airfield to make a speech, the outlines of which had been dictated on board the plane. But, as often was the case, he hardly referred to his prepared speech, for he did not speak from paper. Here are some excerpts from it.

"... I cannot take the credit for all those feelings of friendship expressed by the American people, neither can I give that credit to our communist ideology. In those greetings the Americans were letting us know that they, like us, believed in the struggle for peace, for friendship between our peoples.

"In the first half of our journey I was struck by the fact that the same tune was being hammered away over and over. Speakers maintained that I had once said that we would 'bury the capitalists.' At first I explained patiently that what I had said was that we would 'bury capitalism,' meaning that socialism would inevitably replace this outgoing social system just as capitalism in its day had replaced feudalism. Then I realised that the people who were persistently repeating such questions were not at all interested in an explanation. They had set themselves a definite objective—to make those people having a very vague idea of what communism is afraid of it.

"Time is a good adviser. As the Russian saying goes, 'One is wiser in the morning than he was in the evening.' It's very well put. Let us wait for the morning, all the more so because we

came back in the afternoon and I am speaking already in the evening. And, perhaps, more than one morning will pass before we clarify it all thoroughly. But we are not going to sit with our arms folded waiting for the dawn, to see where the needle of international relations is going to point.

"For our part we are going to do everything so that the needle of the barometer point not to stormy weather, not even to unsettled weather, but to clear skies."

During his stay in the United States Khrushchev also addressed the UN General Assembly, submitting a proposal on general and complete disarmament. He was perfectly aware more than anyone else how far the world was from such a radiant prospect in those days. And yet the idea had been expressed. Khrushchev called for taking a resolute step, spotlighting the objective, foreseeing the difficult path towards it, underlining that the Soviet Union was ready to do everything it could to restructure world relations, taking them from estrangement to unity, from strife to friendship, from injustice to honesty and trust.

The USSR demonstrated its peacefulness by taking concrete actions. At the session of the USSR Supreme Soviet in January 1960 Khrushchev described the dynamics of the Soviet Armed Forces' development over several decades. In 1927 they numbered 586,000 troops; in 1937 their number was 1,433,000; and in 1941, 4,207,000. In 1945 their strength totalled 11,365,000 troops, which was reduced to 2,874,000 in 1948. In 1955 there were 5,763,000 troops; and in 1955-1958, 3,623,000. At that session he proposed, on behalf of the Soviet government, that the Soviet Armed Forces should be cut by yet another 1,200,000 troops to total 2,423,000 officers and men, which was below the level the Western powers were insisting on. The USSR Supreme Soviet accepted the proposal. The session also adopted an Appeal for Peace of the USSR Supreme Soviet to the parliaments and governments of all countries in the world. It seemed that the international situation was becoming calmer.

Many changes were to come and much began to change in the 1950s. In those days the world was becoming more open and at the same time more vulnerable. Despite the divisions between countries and peoples, we began to feel the importance not only of what was happening close to us, but also of what was going on away from home, beyond our boundaries.

International politics were emerging into full public view and judgement. The world was changing.

The panic horror before the all-pervasive radiation was not yet being felt by the people in other parts of the world to the extent that it was in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Soviet Union became the first nuclear power to press for ending nuclear arms tests. But at the same time, we also stated that we had made a bomb which, if exploded, would shatter windows in many houses around the world. It was then that Academician Andrei Sakharov formed his views on this issue—he was against the testing of bombs.

Bad habits are catching. We learned how to smash windows in the buildings rented by foreign embassies in Moscow, and with the same degree of passion as in those foreign capitals where crowds hurled stones at the windows of the Soviet embassies. But the diplomacy of breaking windows soon exhausted itself. The world was going through crisis situations, realising that the globe was indivisible. And both good and evil were close neighbours in those days.

Story number one. January 18, 1960.

An emergency was registered during a storm on the Kuril Islands. In the night a squall-force wind had torn from its mooring berth a small landing barge with four duty soldiers on board. The search yielded no results. As the weeks went by, the barge was considered lost.

And then suddenly on the evening of March 12 came a report from an American news agency. The pilot of a plane based on the aircraft carrier *Kearsarge*, while on a routine patrol flight, had spotted a strange vessel in the ocean. After descending to a lower altitude the pilot had made out the figures of four soldiers in Soviet military uniform. The *Kearsarge* changed her course and headed towards the Soviet barge. Finally, the four young men were brought ashore. What they had endured and the way they had behaved surprised and impressed America. Forty-nine days on the high seas. Gale-force winds with a velocity of 60 to 120 kilometres an hour. Just one can of food and several loaves of bread. Water only from rainfall. The men had eaten their boots, belts, the bellows of an accordion. Each of them had lost 15 to 16 kilogrammes. Their bearded, sun-tanned and weather-beaten faces looked like masks. But they had never given up hope.

To America it was yet another confirmation of the particular character of the Soviet man.

Story number two. May 1, 1960.

Khrushchev was nervous during the military parade. An officer frequently came up to him, taking him aside. After one of the reports, Khrushchev took off his hat and, smiling broadly, waved it over his head. His mood became much better.

The details of the May Day incident were disclosed to the public during that month's session of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Prior to that, however, the American side was officially notified that a spy plane had been shot down over Soviet territory in the course of its intelligence mission. The USSR government regarded the action as unfriendly, aimed at undermining peaceful cooperation between the two countries and returning to the practices of the cold war in international politics.

At first, the Americans pretended not to know anything about the plane. How could they know that the pilot, Francis Gary Powers, had bailed out to safety. American pilots had gone on such flights on more than one occasion, but we were unable to do anything about those spy missions because Soviet interceptor fighters could not fly at the altitudes used by the Americans. This impunity had blunted the vigilance of the US military.

Long before the session of the USSR Supreme Soviet opened diplomats and foreign media correspondents had filled all the guest seats in the Grand Kremlin Palace in anticipation of a big political show.

The deputies and the guests saw enlarged poster-size photographs showing the equipment of the plane, pictures of a number of Soviet areas on film, a snapshot of a pistol with a silencer for Powers' use in the event of a forced landing, and a poisoned needle to be used if it turned out that death was the only alternative.

The Soviet surface-to-air missile had done its job well. The U-2 spy plane was shot down by the first launching.

The trial of Francis G. Powers called into question the very possibility of the summit that was to have taken place in Paris in the autumn of 1960. Khrushchev went there with the firm intention of demanding that President Eisenhower apologise to the Soviet Union and give assurances that the spy flights would be discontinued. The US President failed to comply with this demand, and the summit was called off.

Nevertheless, the search for ways to ease world tensions

continued. Khrushchev went to New York to attend a UN General Assembly session.

In the autumn of 1960 America hardly greeted Nikita Khrushchev with open arms. When the turbo-vessel *Baltika*, a relatively small tourist-class ship, landed in New York, there was nobody there to welcome its passengers except for officials from the Soviet embassy, and the embassies of other socialist countries and some other friendly states. On board the ship were Khrushchev and the heads of state and government of the European socialist countries. It was the first time that a General Assembly session was to be attended by the top leaders from so many countries.

Khrushchev's stay in New York was rather lengthy. As the head of a delegation he spoke on all the main items of the agenda, listened attentively to other speakers, giving an example of a disciplined political leader mindful of his duties. He again raised the question of general and complete disarmament, and urged that an end be put to the disgraceful colonial system. On one occasion, when he was to address a Monday morning session, there were no more than ten representatives from various countries in the hall. Khrushchev was outraged. He turned to the President of the session and the UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld to demand a quorum. "The peoples of the world," Khrushchev exclaimed, "are thinking that their full-fledged representatives at the United Nations are untiringly working for peace and justice, yet in fact many of them have evidently not yet recovered from their Sunday revelling." A short break was announced. Telephones began to ring. One can imagine how some of the sleepy delegates were dragged to the session from their beds: "Come at once, Khrushchev is making a scene." Soon both the hall and the visitors' gallery were full. The public had heard what was happening there.

Journalists could see how tough that New York visit was for Khrushchev. It was impossible for him to travel around and that limited his contacts. Still, he spent hours answering questions from American and other foreign newsmen from the balcony of the Soviet mission to the United Nations. Several dozen and, sometimes, as many as a hundred reporters would block the entire street with the tripods of their still and movie cameras, while he conducted frank conversations on all sorts of subjects. Sometimes pickets carrying posters would line up the street, and Khrushchev would address them, too. He was

never nonplussed, not even by the trickiest of questions and remarks, and they never irritated him. At worst he would shake his head and shame the questioner, saying: "You seem to be quite a clever young man, but what a lot of nonsense you've got in your head."

While the *Baltika* was moored at the port of New York, a member of the crew defected. Newspapermen bombarded Khrushchev with questions about it. He paused (it should be mentioned that he had not been told anything about it), asked again what it was all about, clearly an attempt to gain some time, and then remarked open-heartedly, "Why didn't that young man come to me for help and advice? I would have lent him some money. And, here, in your country, he'll perish, he will, and that's a pity." That closed the subject. Newspapers carried Khrushchev's reply and the sensation died down. I would like to recall another episode, which gave rise to a lot of talk, from the sweetly admiring "That's something, I guess we really showed them!" to the scornful "Just think of it, he banged his shoe on the table and at the United Nations, of all places! How embarrassing! What must they have thought of us?" The fact is, however, that it did not contradict the protocol of the meeting. Many delegates to the General Assembly session laughed heartily and Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who strictly supervised the observance of the rules of order as stipulated by the UN Charter, did not reprimand Khrushchev.

As a matter of fact, the story leading up to that notorious event started the day before. The General Assembly was to discuss the so-called "Hungarian question." Khrushchev was informed of the agenda at breakfast in the Soviet mission. He was told that he would be warned when to get up and walk out in protest. Khrushchev did not completely understand and asked for an explanation. After he was given it, he expressed surprise: "What, walk out at a time when the devil knows who will be reviling our friends, walk out and forego the right to obstruct the discussion?"

So when the President announced that the next item was to be the "Hungarian question," the Soviet delegation did not leave. A surprised murmur went through the hall: "The Soviets aren't walking out." That's when the fun started. Khrushchev continuously (but always in keeping with the procedural rules of order) interjected questions, demanded explanations and specifics, asked the speakers to produce their

credentials as members of their delegations, and so on. There was no time to discuss the "Hungarian question," it was becoming clear that a different, more outspoken method was being used to frustrate the debate. All the members of the Soviet delegation started banging their fists on the folding desks in front of their seats. Many other delegations joined in. Just at that moment, as ill luck would have it, Khrushchev's watch slipped off his hand. He started to look for it under the folding desk, cursing under his breath, for his paunch did not allow him to bend low, when his hand came on a shoe.

I would like to add one last "footnote" to this episode of "shoe-banging diplomacy." After the "Hungarian question," the "Algerian" came up for discussion, at which point the French delegation walked out in a very orderly manner. Someone asked them why they were leaving. "We are going," they replied, with that courtesy typical of the French, "to buy some ski boots."

1961. In many areas the armed forces of the opposing sides were close to each other, dangerously close. Trouble could be expected to flare up anywhere. That was understood by the new US President, John F. Kennedy, who was sworn-in in January 1961. His inauguration speech contained many phrases about peace. Yet it was he who gave the go-ahead for an attack against Cuba the following April. But the gangs of mercenaries and counterrevolutionaries were smashed at Playa Giron. Revolutionary Cuba withstood the test of fire.

In July Kennedy met Khrushchev in Vienna. Khrushchev, having remarked that the attack on Cuba came on April 17, his birthday, asked the President whether it had been done deliberately. The President did not appreciate the joke. On his return from the meeting the Soviet leader summed up the talks optimistically: "The young President seems to be ready to listen to the arguments of the other side. At any rate, he dissociated himself from the assertions about America's direct involvement in the anti-Cuban operation."

Khrushchev said approximately the same to me before my departure on urgent business to the USA. Quite unexpectedly, I had been invited to interview President Kennedy. I can't say it was the best moment for it. In those days storm clouds were gathering over West Berlin. The Americans had aggravated the tension to such an extent that in October the German Democratic Republic set up a real border instead of a conventional demarcation line between East and West Berlin. The

"Berlin wall" enraged the West German extremists. Kennedy's visit to West Berlin added fuel to the fire. However, the realistically-minded politicians saw that there were no grounds for intervention. International law was on the GDR's side. Every country has the right to solve the problem of its border arrangements on its own.

When the 22nd Congress of the CPSU was meeting in October 1961, the situation in West Berlin was very tense. American and Soviet tanks, their engines running, faced each other cannon to cannon at the checkpoint in Friedrichstrasse. One could easily imagine how strained the nerves of their crews must have been. How long could it continue? How volatile the situation was, how easily it could get out of hand when the destinies of millions of people depended on the crews of the Soviet and American tanks. One shot in Sarajevo pushed mankind into World War I, and there, in Berlin, we were perhaps just one step away from a third world war.

It happened, I think, on October 20 or 21. The Congress was in one of its regular sessions when Marshal Ivan Konev came into the room of the presiding committee and asked to see Nikita Khrushchev, saying it was urgent. The Marshal reported that the engines of American tanks had been running in high gear for half an hour. Marshal Konev, who knew what war was like, was nervous. Khrushchev thought for a moment. "Take our tanks to the neighbouring street," he said, "but let their engines run there in the same high gear. And put the noise and roar from the tanks through amplifiers." Konev hesitated: "They may rush forward!" "I don't think so," Khrushchev replied, "unless, of course, the minds of the American military have been made blind with hatred." Turning to his aides, Khrushchev asked them to write down this instruction and put down the exact time.

A little later Marshal Konev reported that the American tanks had withdrawn. And so had ours. There was no report about it in the press.

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**Anatoli STRELYANY,**
writer

# The Last Romantic

A specialist differs from an amateur by knowing the history of the problem. He keeps every aspect of it within his field of vision and understands their interconnection. Khrushchev was an amateur through and through. The history of a problem usually did not exist for him. As a rule, he saw one or, at best, two aspects of a problem, never even suspecting that there might be a whole web of interconnections. This is what enabled him to comment on American farming, the supreme agricultural achievement in the entire history of mankind, by saying: "There is no particular American wisdom in it. They just put in a lot of fertiliser." It was not a matter of his uncouthness. There have always been some extremely uncouth characters among true specialists. Given his cleverness, talent and energy, Krushchev could have learned all about agronomy (if we take agronomy). But he was an amateur by his nature, too easily carried away and impatient. All the time he was forgetting or overlooking something that seemed impossible to forget or overlook, always he was either exaggerating or belittling something whose true dimensions were apparent.

Khrushchev was of the breed of people who seem to have

been created by emergencies and for emergencies, when it is necessary to mobilise everything for a single cause. Such people are good for carrying out large-scale one-time actions, for solving individual problems by the all-hands-on-deck method. To brush aside, to forget everything, to give up everything, not to count, not to measure anything, just to put everybody on one job and pull it off. That working class revolutionary with his small set of very rough, yet ironclad notions of what socialism was, had not the slightest gift for distrust towards hasty, rash advance, the distrust Lenin called for towards the end of his life. Khrushchev might have been helped by folk common sense, of which he had plenty, in doing things far removed from ideology or politics. And they were far removed. That was the whole point. Otherwise he would not have been a revolutionary divorced from life the way only a person could be who had grown up in an ideological atmosphere where a political line or a platform was more important than persons and facts.

How could a different type of person (or people), someone with a different biography have suddenly undertaken to "develop the state-farm* system because it had better forms of the socialist organisation of labour?" How could such a person have turned dozens of thousands of collective farms,** which at least had some rights, into state farms without any rights at all only to be surprised and ask angry questions a few years later: Why are they running at a loss, why is the expenditure on turning them from a lower form into a higher one not yielding any profit? One would not have done that out of sheer respect for theory.

How he used to urge people on, and what a hurry he was in himself! As he saw it, everything should be done quickly, in a soldierly, military manner. Among his concepts there was none dealing with the gradual accumulation of quantity and quality, resources, knowledge and experience. He could not stand any evolution, he recognised only revolution, only leaps and turning points, he drove on and on the "present generation of the Soviet people" into a life under communism. Nothing was routine for him, everything was extraordinary—an extraordinary international situation, extraordinary possi-

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* State farms are large state-owned agricultural enterprises.

** Collective farms and farmers' co-operative organisations for large-scale socialist agricultural production based on the public ownership of the means of production and joint effort.

bilities ("the Soviet system has unlimited possibilities"). He did not want to invest money in the non-black soil zone*: too long to wait for a return, and it was highly doubtful whether there would be any return at all. It was necessary to act only on a dead certainty, put everything into the virgin lands, that was where cheap grain would come from and very soon at that. In January 1954 he put the area of virgin lands to be developed at 12 million hectares. In July 1957 he raised the question of ploughing up another 15 million hectares. He had already made his estimates: if at least 60 poods** of grain per hectare were harvested from a total of 30 million hectares, that would make it possible... That was where both sausage and lard would come from. Just plough it up, sow grain and harvest it, and you would have plenty of both.

It was only when one was continuously carried away by something to the utter oblivion of everything else, only by keeping away from the routine with its annoying details, that one could believe in the rapid and simple solution to the problems he put before the country. It was only by inventing miraculous means of their solution—such as the selection of good people and maize instead of fertiliser and later, almost vice versa, fertiliser instead of maize, that one could maintain some kind of balance. It was faith, the Russian faith that you could grow a lot of grain only under someone's wise leadership and not otherwise, not by the force of eternal circumstances and motivations, that doomed Khrushchev to all his escapades.

Did he see other ways of feeding the people besides those which he used himself and the whole wisdom of which was expressed in several slogans: "Cadres determine everything!", "Organisation determines everything!", "The system of agriculture determines everything!"? Did he know that there were other and, let us say, no less effective incentives to work and creative endeavour besides those he pinned his hopes on and the whole wisdom of which actually boiled down to this appeal: "Long live collectivism! One for all and all for one!"?

Strange as it may seem, he did know about them and at

* The non-black soil zone is a vast soil and climatic area in the Russian Federation marked by low natural fertility of the land, excessive dampness and numerous swamps, all of which make farm production difficult.

** The pood is a Russian unit of weight equal to about 16.38 kilogrammes.

times could speak about them—well and boldly. In 1956 he presented the Order of Lenin to the Moscow Region for taking the country's first place in milk yields. The region had made a big thrust forward compared with 1953, but the yields themselves were not high—2,712 kilogrammes per cow. "Take the Finns, the Danes or the Dutch," Khrushchev said all of a sudden. "They have been getting such yields for a long time and nobody gives them any medals for it." His thought continuously returned to **what** was given there instead of medals, **how** it was done and **what** results it yielded. Khrushchev knew exactly how it happened **there:** "In the capitalist countries where ruthless competition reigns, life itself compels you to be concerned with the economy of your farms, otherwise you won't hold out and you'll perish. It's a law of capitalism. If a farmer fails to make profit, he'll go broke. The capitalist system is merciless in this respect. One entrepreneur can drive another to the grave for a dollar."

His listener, hearing from none other than Nikita Khrushchev that the USA had produced 100 kilogrammes of meat per capita, would think to himself: "Well, a grave is a grave, but the rich can't be eating such a mountain of meat themselves, that's for sure."

So he knew the main features of **those** ways, **those** incentives and methods and understood them.

But he never accepted them.

He believed in his, in our ways, incentives and methods. "In our country, in the conditions of a socialist economy different laws are at work and different methods are used. Our collective farms organise their production on an entirely different basis."

So what were they, those different laws and methods, that different basis, that different discipline? He spoke about them often, with sincerity and enthusiasm: In our country "everyone works in the interests of all, and all work in the interests of everyone. The more gross output a collective farm yields, the more income it gets, the better off the collective farmers will be." He said nothing more specific on this score, not only in his ten years as the country's leader, but not even throughout his life.

He simply repeated the slogans of his early youth, those which carried him away to socialist construction and with the help of which he carried away others. Nikita Khrushchev was a modest man. He believed that all the main things had been

done long before him, and what was left for him to do was sheer trifles, in fact, there was not even anything to finish. He believed that **this** system could work better than **that** on its own fuel, on its own principles, including the special role of the leader, who must be the master. All the main problems had been solved, the whole thing was firmly based on Marxism-Leninism, and all that was needed was to work better and not to "complicate matters" unnecessarily. "The whole problem is in getting the end results more rapidly. And this depends on us."

Two questions intrigued me in particular when I was preparing to write this article. Why did he never, in any of his crushing setbacks, put the blame on the recent war and bad weather? And why did he never recall NEP?* It seems to me that now we can answer these questions. He never put the blame on the war or bad weather because from the first to the last day of his career as the country's leader he was convinced that there were no objective reasons for the lag of agriculture, reasons that stemmed from history and mother nature and were not dependent on anybody. Those who think that he said that for political considerations, to mobilise the masses, forget that Khrushchev's consciousness was utopian from beginning to end, and nothing is more alien to a utopian consciousness than the idea that there are limitations to arranging a paradise on earth and that they are beyond one's power to remove. Everything is within the power of man, he can do anything if he has the appropriate knowledge, skills, enthusiasm, organisation, and leadership. Philosophers only explained the world, our task is to change it... There was something ancient, straightforward and majestic in that energetic faith professed by the uncouth Khrushchev, but, oh, God, how he irritated, how he bored us!

And what about NEP, that attempt to rely on more or less free commerce, to allow state, co-operative and private enterprise at least within some limits? Why was there no place for NEP in his thoughts? After all, when he looked ahead to

* The New Economic Policy (NEP) was in effect in the country in the 1920s to overcome the economic devastation after the civil war and strengthen the alliance between the working class and the peasantry on an economic basis. This policy allowed the development of capitalist elements to some extent within the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which retained the commanding heights in the economy.

the free procurement of food, he came close to it, very close. But why was he walking as if blindfolded, turning back at the very spot where he was getting warm, where he was getting, in fact, quite hot? Why did nothing entice him at that new historical stage, if you will, and given the new state of the productive forces, so to speak (and who knows what else our theoreticians could have come up with to explain it), to try and combine this and that, planning and the market, socialism and capitalism, as Lenin described that reform?

It must be remembered that Khrushchev was from the team Stalin had specially recruited and trained to destroy NEP and build barrack-room and labour-camp socialism. He was not cut out for trade. What kind of new economic policy could be expected from a man who did not care at all how much this or that cost in his own country? He who was born to go wool-gathering cannot trade. If the drive in the late '20s had been not to finish off NEP, but to strengthen it, Khrushchev would not have got anywhere or, to be more exact, he would have got very much elsewhere. He would have remained a fitter (bored to death in his country house, which was more like prison, he recalled that he kept his box of fitter's tools close at hand even when he was already Secretary of the Moscow City Party Committee; incidentally, as a Secretary, he was paid less than when he was a fitter), might have opened a workshop of his own or, more likely, would have become a militant trade union activist, would have been in opposition towards a revisionist government, shouting that it was toeing the traders' line and betraying the ideals.

He was too naive, too whole-hearted to wriggle before himself and the rest of the people, to sit calmly, without the slightest blush of shame, on two chairs and declare that the laws of a commodity-oriented economy were neither capitalist nor socialist, but something like a universal language of business communication. He was not so strong in dialectics as some of our academicians who are promising us all the advantages of full cost-accounting without allowing the operation of the capital and labour market, saying that we shall be able to have our cake and eat it too. A man of integrity, Khrushchev strongly suspected that this, of all things, would not pan out.

Khrushchev believed in his system, believed that its potential was truly unlimited, that the objectives had been chosen correctly, and that it was necessary to advance towards them

and only them without wavering, without any deviation, without concessions to anything that was not ours, that was private or individual. He did not resort to any cunning tricks, did not invent any vague terms like "individual labour activity," he called a spade a spade.

Khrushchev was not an official like Malenkov or a philistine like Brezhnev. He had an extremely keen sense of personal responsibility for the promises his Party made to the people in 1917. Before the revolution "we were not responsible for the state," he sternly reminded Party members in one of his first post-Stalin speeches, but now that the Party ruled the country "merely criticising the capitalist economic system and talking that the economy should be built on the teachings of Marxism-Leninism are not enough. The man in the street says to us:

"'I believe you, I fought for that in the civil war, I fought against the Germans, I defeated fascism, but all the same tell me: Will there be any meat or not? Will there be any milk or not? Will there be good trousers?' That is not an ideology, of course. But we can't have a situation in which everybody has the correct ideology while going about without trousers."

Ten years after the war—not forty or fifty, but ten—he considered such popular demands legitimate and proved that it was no longer possible to put off satisfying them, that the limit had been reached. He was convinced that it was no longer possible to justify shortcomings without resorting to lies or demagogy, regardless of what world imperialist intrigues might be afoot. And he felt that it was not merely meat and trousers that the Communists owed to the people. No, he presented an impressive bill to his Party on behalf of the people: "If we fail to provide our people with higher living standards than in the developed capitalist countries, we must ask ourselves: what kind of Communists are we? For communism is not something out of this world. We are not priests who say that an earthly paradise is only temporary, while a paradise in heaven is eternal and must be earned by suffering here on earth. We," he reminded this audience courageously, "destroyed the bourgeoisie not only to take over power, but also to rebuild the economy, to ensure the highest living standards for our people."

You can't back out once you've begun. Having assumed the leadership of the country, having set itself great tasks and made immense promises to the people, the Party must bear

responsibility for no less than that. Who else could have made such a radical assessment of what was the core of the matter? Who else would have cut off all routes for retreat to himself? On receiving a sobering calculation from economic experts, Khrushchev, if he had wanted to, could have swallowed his pride and stopped chasing America. One set of words could have been ousted by another, yesterday's hullabaloo could have been muffled by today's—all that was not difficult. True, if that had been the case, he would have had to look for another great task for the people, for a leader is not a leader if he does not lead the masses to great achievements. He would have found something and would have led the people. But he could not deceive himself. So long as his country produced only one third of the meat produced in the US, Khrushchev could not but worry about the prestige of socialism in the world. He looked at the bottom of things. No matter how much of a dreamer he might have been, he did not lose sight of the stark reality for a second: the dignity and advantages of socialism could not be provided by the mere absence of exploitation and unemployment, but only by combining this absence with the presence of a good slice of meat. He, a working-class revolutionary, could see no other way out.

Khrushchev was a recognised specialist in raising to unreachable heights the significance of rather common events and accomplishments. The call for the development of virgin and fallow land was an example of this. In a matter of days he filled the air being breathed by the country's youth with such electricity that is still crackling to this day. People in the West called him a brilliant propagandist for the way he had presented man's first ever space flight. And they were not being sarcastic, it may be that they were even grateful, for it was he who made the Americans land on the Moon. Without him they would have been engaged in other, more practical matters for another twenty years or so. That brilliant propagandist, however, knew where and in what areas propaganda was helpless. No slogan could replace a piece of meat or trousers. To believe the economists' calculations would have meant to acknowledge that your notions of the potential of socialism were wrong. To put up with the fact that it would take two decades to catch up with America meant only one thing to Khrushchev: it would "enable the ideologists of the capitalist world to hold forth against the socialist system, against the collective farm system for a long time to come." The prospect

of arguing with them on an empty stomach for another twenty years did not suit him at all.

An unsystematic person, Khrushchev was all sorts of things, including a utopian. But he was not an adventurist. He had simply decided to test Stalin's brainchild in a big way and placed the system under the loads specified in its instruction manual. And so he arranged for that test (absolutely unintentionally, which made the results all the more reliable). The '60s began with such glorifications addressed to him that it seemed that "our Nikita Sergeyevich" would never lose faith in his infallibility. Yet he managed to rise to self-criticism, and that, evidently, was linked not only with his nature, but also with his frame of mind. If he had not discovered major mistakes in his past activities, if he had not blamed himself for his failures, he would have had no choice but to blame the system. And he could not do that, not yet. It was necessary for him to believe that communism was just around the corner. By admitting his mistakes he strengthened this belief and rushed ahead, but was stopped at full tilt. It is said that on one occasion he summoned about 500 high-ranking officials to deliver a hysterically self-critical speech before them. He said that, working with them, he had failed to keep the promises he had made to the people, that nothing worked well under their leadership and that, evidently, it was necessary to make room for others, to let others try their hand at it. Some people believe that it was the seriousness of Khrushchev's intention or outburst that speeded up the end of his political career. The Stalinists and philistines (the former wanted to put the country in real order without him, the latter sought to eat, drink and be merry to their hearts' content) were equally against Khrushchev setting an example projected into the future. A country where the top leader could leave his office only as a result of his death or a conspiracy was one thing; that was their country. But a country where a person acknowledged his defeat, ceded his place to another person with dignity and, surrounded by the proper respect and attention, continued to take part in the life of society to whatever extent he could, that was an entirely different country, that was worse than a foreign land to them.

It is also said that before going on holiday Khrushchev

gathered his associates around him together and told them that the question that was being debated of late had come to his knowledge and promised threateningly to return to the subject after his holiday.

The comrades realised that there was no time to lose.

**ИЗВЕСТИЯ**

*Izvestia of the Soviets of People's Deputies of the USSR* is a daily newspaper published by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Founded in March 1917. Circulation—9,960,000 copies.

Interview with
**Gennadi VORONOV,**
former member of the Politbureau
of the CPSU Central Committee

# From a Thaw to Stagnation

**A country house of the Council of Ministers in Petrovo-Dalneye. The man I am talking to is about 80 years old. He reads a great deal, closely follows events and discusses them with a keen interest. However, my conversation with Gennadi Voronov is not about contemporary events, but about those of more than two decades ago. And we are conducting it from two points of view. One is mine, the point of view of an ordinary citizen—the way I saw everything "from below." The other is that of a man who was one of the key figures in the leadership of the Party and the country in those years. How did he assess the events at that time? And how does he assess them now?**

**I wanted to start our conversation with the October Plenary Meeting of the Party Central Committee in 1964 that relieved Nikita Khrushchev of all his posts. But Gennadi Voronov preferred to begin with a general appraisal of the ten-year thaw.**

I am convinced that that decade still awaits objective study and analysis, which should, in the first place, single out what was the milestone of that period. I think that it was the exposure of the personality cult and its crimes, the setting free of millions of people, the assertion of a new atmosphere in the country, a freer and more democratic one, the victory over the

strong pro-Stalinist group comprised of Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich. Secondly, it is necessary to clearly separate the achievements of that period from the mistakes and extremes. For instance, it should be said in no uncertain terms that those who wanted to plant maize right up to the White Sea were either thoughtless yes-men or career-seekers. As for the serious people who began to cultivate it back then, for instance, in the Krasnoyarsk Territory, they are not about to give it up even today, for it makes up the core of their fodder base. Or take the "Khrushchevki," the apartments that started being constructed then, which have been the subject of so much derision. You can laugh all you want, but the truth is that those five-storey panel houses made it possible to start solving the housing problem in earnest and on a large scale for the first time. Millions of people living in basement flats, cramped communal apartments, and barracks were rehoused. One can criticise the idea of economic councils* from today's standpoint, but one should not forget that it was the economic councils that helped restrict the absolute power of the ministries and other departments and stimulate local economic initiative.

Thirdly, it is necessary to analyse the causes of mistakes, separating subjective reasons, for which Khrushchev was personally to blame, from objective ones. And one must admit here that despite his native intelligence and energy, Khrushchev lacked genuine culture, the broadness of outlook vital for the leader of such a state as ours. Realising that, Khrushchev tried to seek the broad support of his entourage. But he did not always understand whom and in what things he should trust and whom he should not. In my opinion, it is here that one should look for the root causes of his appraisals and directives, which jarred on many ears, in the field of literature and art, for instance, to say nothing of agriculture. In general, I would single out three paradoxes that marked that period. The first was that the people who had brought Khrushchev to the most unpopular decisions and voted for them, in the final analysis remained in the shadow while the full force of public antipathy came on Khrushchev, the leader. The second was that Khrushchev, while asserting the spirit of innovation,

* Economic councils were state bodies for the territorial management of industry and construction in the USSR in 1917-1932 and in 1957-1965.

more and more often relied not on those who argued with him but on yes-men. And the third paradox was that it was those yes-men who were later particularly merciless in accusing him of making mistakes and arbitrary decisions.

**You mean the assessments made at the October Plenary Meeting in 1964?**

Yes, them, and the subsequent playing-up of Khrushchev's mistakes while ignoring, denying the main, positive things he had done. Now the time has come to restore the truth.

**Doesn't restoring the truth mean, in the first place, that you yourself must also make corrections in your earlier assessments? And, in the second place, since it has become necessary to restore the truth, doesn't that mean that in those days, in 1964, the situation with the truth was no longer the way it had been at the 20th Congress, where Nikita Khrushchev's report sounded like a purifying storm? However, the following figures were stated in his report to the session of the USSR Supreme Soviet in the summer of 1964, several months before his removal from office: over the past two five-year plan periods grain output had increased by 77 per cent, the production of meat had more than doubled, milk yields had gone up by 76 per cent, and the production of butter had grown by 82 per cent.**

**I don't know how Khrushchev's closest associates viewed those figures, but I do know that they irritated many common people. It was just the previous autumn that residents in several cities were compelled to recall, for the first time in many years, what bread coupons meant and to stand in long queues for bread. It was also then that grain was purchased abroad for the first time.**

**Meat and milk? But their prices had just been considerably raised. At the same time, both urban and rural residents were forbidden to keep cattle. Who among the people could fail to see this truth? And who could support this course of events? Whatever you may say, all these things lowered Khrushchev's prestige and, as a result, many just ordinary people regarded his replacement as quite a logical finale.**

What you have said is not the whole truth either. The difficulties with bread in the autumn of 1963 were temporary. It happened only once and was caused by a crop failure. Grain purchases also took place only once—we bought 12 million tons. This is nothing compared with the purchases, which became a chronic phenomenon shortly afterwards.

As for the increases in the prices of milk and meat, they were also temporary, and the revenue thus gained was to be used to raise the output of livestock farming. I'm convinced that this would bring good results. The problem, however, was that those enormous sums of money—and this was after Khrushchev—were used for different purposes, and they were lost.

As to the removal of cattle from personal subsidiary holdings, it reflected the desire of local officials to distinguish themselves in the eyes of the country's leadership rather than confidence that social livestock farming would experience a rapid upsurge. But I still maintain that the main things done by Nikita Khrushchev far outweigh even his obvious mistakes.

**I still cannot get rid of the question: What prevented the leadership at that time from appraising Khrushchev's role objectively or, at any rate, from avoiding many absurdities? Officially, it was announced that Khrushchev was retiring because of ill health and that's why he had been relieved of his duties. Yet many couldn't help recalling that even in the last months, in fact, right up to his replacement, Khrushchev had been very active, spent a lot of time travelling both inside and outside the country, and had made frequent public statements.**

**Six months before his replacement, in April, Khrushchev's associates, including Gennadi Voronov, wishing him all the best on his 70th birthday, expressed the hope that he had lived only half of his life and wished him "to continue living at least as long and as brilliantly and fruitfully." Another message of greetings noted that under Khrushchev's leadership the Party had ensured an unparalleled increase in the country's economic, defence, ideological and political might and scored major successes in improving the people's well-being. On this occasion Leonid Brezhnev presented Khrushchev with the fourth Gold Star medal and kissed him three times.**

**All that happened at a time when preparations for what is now described as a secret plot against Nikita Khrushchev were at their height.**

**Though I realised that it was annoying to him to recall all that, I couldn't help asking Gennadi Voronov again:**

**"Please, tell me how it happened. You were in the know, weren't you?"**

**"Who needs that?" he said, trying to avoid answering the question. "None of that will be published, take my word for it." But, finally, he decided to speak about it.**

All those preparations had been going on for approximately a year. The threads led to Zavidovo, where Brezhnev usually went hunting. Brezhnev himself had a list of the Central Committee members, where he put "pluses" by the surnames of those who were prepared to support him in the struggle against Khrushchev and "minuses" by the others. Each of us was subjected to an arm-twisting tête-à-tête.

**You too?**

Yes, a whole night.

Nowadays Suslov is written and talked about as the key figure in those events. I think that he deserves special mention. It's important to understand why he was the Party's ideologist for so many years. Take, for instance, his speeches at three Party Congresses—the 19th, where he glorified Stalin; the 22nd, where he praised Khrushchev to the skies; and the 26th, when Brezhnev was at the height of his power. The main element in Suslov's stand was his readiness to follow whoever was the strongest at any given moment. In those days, too, in 1964, he was given the prepared text of the report before the Plenary Meeting. All the chief ideologist had to do was deliver it. Which he did. Among the accusations hurled at Khrushchev was the fact that, when visiting various localities, he was more and more often turning directly to the heads of the Soviets to discuss economic questions, bypassing the Party leadership. All the accusations fitted a pattern, so to speak. Today it is clear that the purpose of Khrushchev's replacement was not to correct mistakes, not to follow the line of the 20th Party Congress more closely, but to seize power in order to turn off that road. This already manifested itself shortly afterwards in a seemingly minor detail: a bust of Stalin was set up at the Kremlin wall. As for Khrushchev, he gave up as soon as the Plenary Meeting began. He sat down aside from the presiding committee and didn't say a word in his defence. That was why even his supporters didn't try to defend him. Mikoyan alone suggested that Khrushchev should remain at least in one post, either as head of the Party or head of government, but he was not supported.

**In those days there was only one version of the truth—to which everyone agreed unanimously. And, conversely, only unanimity was considered the truth. Well, and what about the main lesson of those events? What is it?**

The participants in the Plenary Meeting were guided by different motives, yet we all made the same mistake: instead of

putting right the errors of one remarkable personality who was at the head of the Party, we put our stakes on another personality who was far less remarkable. Such mistakes are inevitable when there is no mechanism for the criticism of the leadership, for correcting its errors and for replacing it if need be.

The problem was that democratic experience at that point was still very weak. While trying to overcome the burden of the past, Khrushchev and us, the members of his entourage, were to a considerable extent a product of that past and, in expanding the framework of democracy, did not bother to involve the people into the process of reforms.

All of us, including Khrushchev, had to pay for that half-hearted democracy, which, furthermore, was not backed by any political guarantees. Let us be objective: at first many people liked the restraint of the leadership that came to replace Khrushchev. One wished to believe that since there were fewer words there would be more action. Nor were things so bad: a number of experiments got under way in the economy, the policy of detente brought its fruits, but on the whole the train was already slowing down its movement.

**Interviewed by Ruslan Lynev**

Собеседник

*Sobesednik* is a weekly illustrated supplement to the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. Founded in February 1984. Circulation—1.3 million copies.

Interview with Sergei
**KHRUSHCHEV, D. Sc.**
(Technology)

# "That Was How the Time Judged..."

**There has been much talk in our press of late about the unseemly behaviour of the children of the country's former leadership. As is known, Galina Brezhneva is beyond competition in this respect. By obvious analogy I should like to ask you: have there been any such "capers" in your life? Why do you think the two generations of government children, so to speak, differ so strikingly? You are a well-known specialist in cybernetics, the deputy director of a large research institute; your sister, Rada, is deputy editor-in-chief of the magazine *Nauka i Zhizn;* Sergo Mikoyan is editor-in-chief of the magazine *Latinskaya America;* while Anatoli Gromyko heads the Institute of African Studies. In other words, there are plenty of such cases in point. And next to them are the facts I mentioned to begin with.**

Evidently, we were somehow brought up differently. Frankly speaking, such things could never have even occurred to us. Quite simply, we always knew that such behaviour would not just mean a family scandal—I can't even imagine how outraged my father would have been. You see, they were different people. As far as I remember, our parents had no passion for hoarding treasures, for snatching more for them-

selves. For instance, when my father, Nikita Khrushchev, was removed from the post of head of state and the Party, the only furniture we took along with us from the residence in Lenin Hills was bookcases. Mother had bought them when we were still in Kiev, and since then we had been dragging them along with us in our numerous moves as the only family treasure. Everything surrounding our life belonged to the state. All the furniture in the residence was marked with inventory numbers. Even the bed linen bore the invariable stamps. It was considered normal, the natural order of things, and we, children, took it for granted. And it concerned not only us. I remember that on one of the hard days shortly before the memorable 1957 Plenary Meeting my father asked my mother: "Do you use a car?" Mother replied that a Pobeda car was sent from the Kremlin garage for her needs. "You shouldn't use it!" my father rumbled. Of course, it's an insignificant detail, but, in my view, it's characteristic. In other words, there was not even a hint of a permissive atmosphere in our family and I don't think there could have been any.

**Did you often argue with your father? You were close to him and, it would seem, could have somehow influenced his opinion, various assessments of people and events, and, perhaps, could have warned him against some of the poorly thought-out actions he was later blamed for?**

Influence is easier said than done! Father couldn't stand even the slightest interference from the family in what concerned the affairs of state. This sphere was absolute taboo in our family and I never even tried to thrust my opinion on my father, no matter how much I might have disagreed with his. Sometimes he would ask me about some technical details, such as something about missile-building and defence technology, since I was involved in these problems. Naturally, I tried to be as objective as possible in my replies. But it was rather difficult to deal with father in this respect. He was an impulsive man and could make mistakes. I remember that once he put me in an extremely embarrassing situation. It was like this. He had asked me about something to do with missiles, and I had given him my opinion for his personal use, as it were. He nodded and later, at the next meeting on defence questions, stated in reply to someone's argumentation: "But Sergei has told me this and that..." When I learned about it, I just spread out my hands in a helpless gesture. Whenever we began to criticise him for having made some mistake, father would simply cut us

short by saying that we should mind our own business. In general, he believed that making assessments was a specialist's prerogative. Of course, the entourage, which actively built up father's personality cult, also played no small part in shaping his peremptory tone. The yes-men supported everything he said, expressing their delighted approval and doing everything possible to convince him that it was he who knew the ultimate truth. Keeping a level head and that measure of self-criticism so vital for a politician is not easy in such conditions.

**All right, affairs of state are one thing. I agree that this is a delicate subject. But take art, for instance. It is widely known that Nikita Khrushchev was intolerant towards modern art, especially towards the avant-garde, and that he hated jazz. But you and your sisters were young back then, and must have shared the liking among young people for contemporary art forms. It would have been strange if you hadn't tried to explain why you liked them.**

Of course we tried many times to find a common language with father on these issues. Father was very fond of music, in general, he had an ear for it. He loved folk songs, operas, classical music, plays, but only in their traditional—if I may say so—forms. On the other hand, as I have indicated, it was hard for my father to change long-established views. Besides, those in charge of ideological matters kept warning him against the infiltration of capitalist ideology into our society, saying that it would turn culture into a kind of bugbear. Naturally, this continuous pressure made its imprint on my father's own likes and dislikes. When we would tell him that, say, jazz was not a mine planted by the capitalists but a musical genre or that Ernst Neizvestny was a talented sculptor, while Andrei Voznesensky was an excellent poet, he would reply: "Somebody's put you up to it and you're only too happy to slavishly repeat it. Mind your own business!" What it all boils down to was that my father simply could not understand certain things, and the incomprehensible irritated him and made him lash out. Besides, one should not forget that he was a man of his epoch, he recognised only two appraisals: "ours" or "not ours," and acted accordingly.

**But he himself came out against such methods...**

Yet he himself used them! Quite right! There is nothing surprising about it. The thing is that my father's formation as a political figure took place in the conditions of the time we now recall with bitterness. Both he himself and all his teachers

knew only one form of relations, that of command and administration. In my view, this was the greatest misfortune and contradiction in my father's life.

**And what do you know about your father's role in the Boris Pasternak case?**

You see, my father, of course, knew that there was such a poet, but he had only a very vague idea of what the man really was. When the whole thing began to unfold, father's mind was preoccupied with something else and, besides that, efforts were made to shut him off from information. In general, this was not in his line, for culture was other people's sphere of activity. It was only reported to him that Pasternak had sent his manuscript to the West. In the context of those times it was regarded as treason. Having informed father in a purely formal way, those people inspired that whole tragic situation. But when father received Pasternak's letter, he summoned one of his aides, asking him what had been done to Pasternak, and telling him that the man should be left alone and that all the fuss should be stopped. And it was.

**You said that the affairs of state were always a taboo subject in your conversations with your father. But, I've heard that, as fate would have it, you were the first to find out about the plot which resulted in your father's removal from his posts and also the first to break the news of it to him. In spite of learning about it, he took practically no steps to frustrate the plotters' schemes. That was how that bloodless coup was pulled off, resulting in the period of stagnation in our history. Didn't you try to somehow influence your father, to prod him into working out some sort of countermeasures? For, in fact, he surrendered without a fight.**

You're quite right: By the will of fate or, actually, completely by chance, I was the first in our family to learn about the plan to remove father from office. I won't talk about that detective story here. I'll just tell you that for a long time before I decided to inform my father of what I knew I had been going through the rather painful process of weighing all the "pros" and "cons." Besides, as I have said, my father couldn't stand any interference in his affairs. And here I would be telling him not only about the opposition and the plot, but I would also have to name those involved. Brezhnev, Podgorny, Shelepin were all his friends, comrades of long standing in a common cause, who, he believed, shared his views. One can easily understand my difficulty. Nevertheless, I told him everything I knew. As for any attempts on my part to somehow influence

father, that was out of the question, he would not have stood for even a hint of that! Actually, he had no need for my advice, for I learned later that he had made up his mind to quit without a struggle from the very outset.

**Is it true that Nikita Khrushchev said he wanted Ernst Neizvestny to design his tombstone in his will?**

That's a widespread story, but it's not true. He didn't say anything about it in his will. It's just that when father died and the question of a tombstone arose, both us and those close to our family, without having discussed it before, named Neizvestny as the only candidate for the job. Remembering his complex relations with my father it took me a while to get up the nerve to telephone Neizvestny. But eventually I plucked up my courage and called him. Neizvestny agreed immediately, and we began to work. That phone call resulted not only in a monument in Novodevichye cemetery in Moscow, it marked the beginning of our friendship.

**But why in the cemetery? It's always seemed strange to me that a former head of state and, furthermore, one of such a calibre as Nikita Khrushchev, was buried not at the Kremlin wall, but in a city cemetery, even though it is Novodevichye cemetery. How did it happen?**

Father died on a Saturday morning, and throughout the day we didn't know what the arrangements would be. It was only in the evening that we were told where he would be buried and how. Evidently, it was then that the subsequent "model" of funerals was worked out. The official who came to our place in the evening told us that since at the time of his death Nikita Khrushchev was an ordinary pensioner, the funeral should also be quite an ordinary, family affair. A grave site was allotted in Novodevichye cemetery and we were told we could see it the following day. In the morning I went to the cemetery and was shown a freshly dug grave in a far corner. I then asked if it wouldn't be possible to change the site and bury him closer to the entrance. No, I was told, that was impossible. I then asked if a site couldn't be chosen that would at least be closer to the central lane. Permission for that was granted. A new grave was dug and it was there that father was buried.

**What do you think the reason was for such posthumous disgrace?**

You see, Leonid Brezhnev's attitude towards father was completely inappropriate. Apparently, he wanted Khrushchev

to be entirely forgotten. They met only once after father's retirement, when Brezhnev invited my father to come see him so that he could explain to my father his new status and define the framework of his future life. I know virtually nothing about the details of that meeting. But later I noticed on more than one occasion some small pricks intended to "poison" father's life as much as possible. Evidently, that kind of behaviour is typical of such people like Brezhnev. When my father was working he could be quick to make judgements and not too fastidious in his choice of words. Brezhnev could never forgive him that once he had called him a "loafer" for some mistake. Incidentally, very many people justly blamed father for his general lack of restraint, although, in my opinion, it was not a serious shortcoming in such a big cause.

**How did Nikita Khrushchev spend his last years? What were his pastimes, what filled his life?**

Naturally, father found it very hard to endure the change-over from such an active life to an inactive one. At first he didn't know what to do with himself. He spent all his time in the country house in Petrovo-Dalneye near Moscow. At the beginning, father simply could not adapt himself to his new way of life, no matter how hard he tried. He would take up a book, and immediately put it back down. At first he wasn't especially interested in watching TV. He strolled a great deal, and both I and others, when we had time, would keep him company. But gradually father somehow adapted to his new life. He developed new hobbies, for instance, he planted a vegetable garden and worked in it with his usual passion, "according to science." Later he went in for photography. And after some time he began to work on his memoirs. Of course, we actively supported this intention. To say nothing of the fact that his memoirs could be of considerable historic interest as a unique document of the epoch, it was meaningful work for him, a kind of return to active creative life. In a word, he really began to work, and became more and more carried away by it with every passing day. Father would dictate his reminiscences on tape and I would edit them later. He and I worked that way for several years.

The news that father was working on his memoirs alarmed the leadership of that time a great deal. It was demanded that he stop his work. He emphatically refused to do so and, despite all obstacles, the book was written. It has now been published in many countries, and I make bold to hope that it

will at last appear in our country in the not so distant future. The history of the writing of these memoirs and their publication deserves a special narrative—it contains quite a few dramatic details. Actually, that's only logical, for the life of their author was also full of dramatic events. And even the way his death was treated and the preceding years of obscurity were to no small degree a mirror reflecting the realia of our life in those days, the contradictions of our society at the time of stagnation. Of course, I and the rest of my family are happy about the fact that father is now in a way returning to the people from his non-existence in the entire fullness of his contradictory personality. It means that the people need him, his successes and mistakes, his victories and defeats, so that we who live today will be able to draw some conclusions from that extraordinary fate. It signifies the judgement of time.

**Interviewed by Konstantin Mashkin**

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**Fyodor BURLATSKY**
D.Sc. (History)

# Khrushchev. Strokes to the Political Portrait

How did it happen that it was Khrushchev who became the country's leader after Stalin? It seemed that Stalin had "purged" the Party of all his enemies, both real and imaginary, from the "Right" and the "Left." It appeared that only the most faithful, the most reliable had survived. How did Stalin fail to see the grave-digger of his cult in Khrushchev?

In his last years, shortly before his death, Stalin subjected Molotov and Mikoyan to disgrace. Clearly, he was preparing the same fate for them that had befallen other leaders that had been liquidated with their aid and support. When the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee was set up at the 19th Congress to replace the Politbureau, a narrower body in its composition, it was a step towards the "shooting" of the next generation of associates that had been around "too long." But, paradoxically, Stalin never suspected Khrushchev.

What was it, senile blindness? I doubt it. It seems that somehow Khrushchev managed to appear to be a completely tame man without any particular ambitions. Obviously, however, deep in his heart Khrushchev harboured protest.

Khrushchev's coming to power was both logical and a matter of chance. It was logical because he expressed that

trend in the Party which, in other conditions and, probably, in a different way, was represented by those who supported the development of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and democratisation and were opposed to the use of coercion both in industry and farming, to say nothing of culture. This trend never died in spite of Stalin's cruel reprisals.

At the same time, there was a great deal of chance involved as well. If Malenkov had come to terms with Beria, if "Stalin's guard" had closed ranks in 1953 and not in June 1957, Khrushchev would never have become the leader. Soviet history itself would have taken a somewhat different course. Though it is hard to say what would have happened, it is true that everything hung in the balance.

And yet history made the right choice, providing an answer to the real problems of our life. The countryside, which was growing poorer and poorer and was actually half-ruined, the technologically backward industry, the extreme shortage of housing, the low living standards, the millions of people in prisons and labour camps, the country's isolation from the outside world—all that called for a new policy, for radical change. And Khrushchev came along—precisely—as the hope of the people, as the precursor of the New Times.

In those days we were deeply concerned about everything to do with the 20th Congress of the CPSU. How was it that Khrushchev was brave enough to make a report on Stalin, knowing that the vast majority of the delegates would be against exposures? Where did he find such courage and on what did he base his confidence in his ultimate success? That was one of those rare cases in history when a political leader put his own power and even life on the line for the sake of supreme social objectives. Among the post-Stalin leadership there was no one else who would have been bold enough to come up with such a report on the personality cult. In my view, it was Khrushchev and only Khrushchev who could do this, and with such courage, feeling and, in many respects, impetuosity. One had to possess Khrushchev's nature, his recklessness, which bordered on adventurism; one had to have gone through the tests of suffering, fear and time-serving to dare to take such a step.

I happened to hear Khrushchev explain how he understood his role in the country's history. He said that Lenin had gone down in history as the organiser of the revolution, the founder

of the Party and State, and Stalin, despite his mistakes, as the man who had ensured victory in the sanguinary war against fascism. Khrushchev saw his own mission in providing peace and well-being for the Soviet people. He spoke about it on more than one occasion as the main objective of his activities.

His problem, however, was that he failed to see clearly the means to this end. Despite all of his radicalism, he rejected a critical remark made by Palmiro Togliatti, who advised him to look for the roots of the personality cult in the system, not that Togliatti was suggesting replacing socialism with capitalism, of course. What he meant was a change in the regime of personal power.

A passion for novelty and an active nature were Khrushchev's intrinsic features. Take, for instance, the large-scale programme for reviving agriculture, the setting up of economic councils, the intensive housing construction, and the technical re-equipment of industry. Take the introduction of passports in the countryside, of pensions for farmers and higher earnings for lowly-paid workers. Take the drafting of the new Party Programme, the renovation of the basic laws, and a change in the principles and style as regards relations with the West. And even the famous maize epic... Everything reflected a search for his own ways and solutions, his irrepressible public-spirited temperament. Khrushchev's times were marked by a cultural rebirth, although it bore the obvious imprint of the past epoch, was contradictory and often of little effect.

It was Khrushchev who, at his own initiative, put forward the task of creating firm guarantees against recurrences of the personality cult. He waged an uncompromising struggle for that both inside the country and on the world scene, disregarding the damage this struggle could inflict on relations with this or that country in the socialist community.

If we are to speak of the past, one of the practical conclusions was linked with the necessity of a more consistent implementation of the principle of the replacement of personnel. This problem aroused more argument than any other one. The idea of rotating personnel, which came directly from the First Sercetary, underwent a number of changes. At least ten versions of formulas were worked out to give it adequate embodiment. Khrushchev wanted to create at least some guarantees against the excessive concentration of power in the

hands of one person, against leaders staying in power too long, against cadres at all levels, from the primary Party organisations to the upper echelon, retaining their posts when they have become too old. As for the primary organisation, these ideas did not stir up any particular controversy. But as to rotation at the top, there were sharp differences of opinions. Even he Khrushchev, with all his prestige, tenacity and perseverance, had to back down on this point.

The original draft said that those in the upper leadership could not stay in their positions for more than two terms. This aroused stormy protests among younger leaders. They felt that the representatives of the older generation, who "had sat in their offices far too long," were trying to limit their opportunities. They considered it utterly unfair. In the next draft the number of terms was increased to three, but even that was rejected. In the final text the whole idea of creating a new procedure for the replacement of cadres had been hacked up beyond recognition.

The problem of guarantees against a regime of personal power ran into an insurmountable obstacle—the limited political culture of Khrushchev himself and the generation of leaders at that time. That culture was patriarchal in many ways, drawn from the traditional views on the forms of leadership within the framework of a farm-stead. Paternalism, meddling in any affairs and relations, the infallibility of the patriarch, intolerance to other views—all those things were typical features of the age-old notions of power in Russia.

Khrushchev's definite weakness as a leader also played a role of no small importance. His inability to choose the right personnel was noticed already during his work in Kiev and, later, in Moscow. He was always more inclined to rely on flatterers than on genuine supporters of his reforms. That was why he surrounded himself with such persons as, for instance, Nikolai Podgorny, who ate out of his hand and was prepared to carry out any of his orders. That was why independent, prominent personalities had little appeal to him. Khrushchev was too self-confident to seek support from others. And that became one of the reasons for his downfall. People who did not sincerely share his reformist views, who considered them a manifestation of incompetence or even eccentricity, got rid of him at the first opportunity.

Khrushchev's haste and striving to interfere in any problem and resolve it quickly affected his relations with the intel-

ligentsia. Here, as often as not, he was putty in the hands of his far-from-disinterested advisers and even of his secret opponents who prepared his downfall. I remember well that his visit to an art show in the Manege had been prompted by specially prepared references. The latter had little to do with the problems of art. Instead, both real and invented statements about Khrushchev by writers and artists were quoted, in which he was referred to as "Ivan the fool," "maize-monger," and "windbag." Worked up to the limit, Khrushchev went to the Manege to give artists a good dressing-down. Khrushchev's secret opponents used the same trick to involve him in the Boris Pasternak case and set him at loggerheads with many writers, artists and scientists.

Economic policy remained one of the particularly vulnerable spots in his activity. He saw the solution to the problem chiefly in changing the methods of economic management at the departmental level—in the State Planning Committee, economic councils and ministries. But he failed to understand the significance of radical structural reforms to change the living and working conditions of direct producers—workers, farmers, scientists and technologists.

The situation as regards changes in the sphere of government administration and the structure of the Party leadership was even worse. Who "palmed off" on Khrushchev the idea of dividing the Party District and Regional Committees each into industrial and agricultural ones? My intuition tells me that this was done with malicious intent—to undermine his prestige among Party leaders once and for all.

Khrushchev was blamed for all those mistakes at the October Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee in 1964. The Meeting saw a strange alliance of entirely different political forces, from those who pressed for consistent adherence to the line of the 20th Congress to conservatives and secret Stalinists. All of them closed ranks against the leader who had brought most of them to the "top." Subsequent events left no doubt that Khrushchev had been removed from office not so much for his arbitrary decisions as for his irrepressible passion for change. The slogan of "stability" put forward by his successors slowed down the much-needed reforms for a long time. The very word "reform" and mention of the 20th Congress became dangerous and cost the political career of many who had supported that policy.

Time has failed to dispel the numerous legends around

Khrushchev's name both in the Soviet Union and abroad. Having shared the fate of many reformers, Khrushchev failed to win objective recognition in the minds of the masses. After Stalin, the people could not accept a leader who lacked a mystical aura, was human and down-to-earth, and subject to error and delusion.

One could say that a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country. But that would not be entirely correct. The problem is deeper and more complex. Perhaps, Ernst Neizvestny, with whom Khrushchev conducted his cavalier polemics in the Manege, came closer than anyone else to the right appraisal of Khrushchev. The monument on Khrushchev's grave made by the sculptor—a bronze head against a background of white and black marble slabs—aptly symbolises the contradictory nature of the "thaw" and its main hero.

Nowadays, nearly a quarter of a century later, when comparing the period before and after October 1964, we can better see both the strength and weakness of Khrushchev. His chief accomplishment was that he crushed the Stalin personality cult. That proved irreversible despite all the cowardly attempts to put the pedestal in its old place. They came to nothing. And that means that the furrow was ploughed deeply enough. It means that the ploughman's work was not in vain. The courageous decision to exonerate many Communists and non-Communists who were subjected to repressions and executions during the personality cult restored justice, truth and honour in the life of the Party and the State. A strong blow, although not totally effective or always skilfully dealt, was delivered against overcentralisation, bureaucracy and the arrogance of officialdom.

It was in Khrushchev's times that a turning point came in the development of agriculture. Purchase prices were increased, taxes were cut drastically, and the use of new technologies introduced. Despite its shortcomings, the development of virgin lands has played a role in ensuring food supply to the population. Khrushchev, as regards the countryside, tried to turn to foreign experience, to start an agricultural revolution. Even his passion for maize was prompted by good intentions, although it was carried to extremes. Megalomania in agriculture and cuts in the sizes of subsidiary household plots also did him harm.

The Party began to solve many social problems in those

days. Living standards started to rise noticeably both in town and the countryside. However, the projected economic and social reforms became bogged down.

One mistake, in my opinion, was that the search for the concept of reforms and the ways of their implementation was based on traditional administrative and even bureaucratic methods. Usually, Khrushchev gave instructions on studying this or that economic, cultural or political problem to ministries and other departments, that is, to the very administrative mechanism that was supposed to limit its own power. And that mechanism always found a way to evade control through direct, indirect or ambivalent decisions.

Another major factor was that the people kept silent. Nowadays, with the experience of glasnost or openness, we can see very clearly how little was done back then to inform the people of the past, of the real problems, of projected decisions, to say nothing of involving the general public in the struggle for reforms. How many times did I hear the following in those days: "And what makes Khrushchev better than Stalin? Under Stalin at least there was order, bureaucrats were jailed and prices were cut down." Significantly, during the October Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee in 1964, almost the majority of people throughout the country breathed a sigh of relief and began to look forward to favourable changes.

And the final lesson. It concerns Khrushchev himself. An active and courageous man of sharp natural political intelligence, he failed to resist the temptation of glorifying his own personality. Toadies drowned him in a sea of flattery and praise, who in turn received high posts, top awards, prizes and titles. And it was not accidental that the worse things became in the country, the louder and more delighted became the chorus of toadies and flatterers singing of the successes of the "great decade."

# SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

**BERIA Lavrenti** (1899-1953)—In 1931 he became First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, and in 1932, First Secretary of the Transcaucasian Territorial Party Committee. In 1938 he was appointed People's Commissar (Minister) of Internal Affairs of the USSR, a post he held simultaneously starting in 1941 with that of Vice-Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. He was the organiser of the mass reprisals during the years of the Stalin personality cult and an active participant in them. He was executed in December 1953.

**BREZHNEV Leonid** (1906-1982)—A member of the CPSU since 1931, in 1946-1950 he was First Secretary of the Zaporozhye and Dnepropetrovsk Regional Committees of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine. In 1950-1952 he was First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldavia. In 1953 he became Deputy Chief of the Main Political Department of the Soviet Army and Navy. In 1954-1956 he was Second and then First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. In 1960-1964 he was Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. In 1952-1953, 1956-1960, and 1963-1964 he was Secretary and in 1964-1966 First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. In 1966 he became General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. From 1977 till his death he was also Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and Chairman of the Defence Council. He was made a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee in 1957 (alternate member in 1952-1953, 1956-1957).

**BULGANIN Nikolai** (1895-1975)—A member of the CPSU since 1917, in 1937 he became Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian Federation. In 1938 he was made Vice-Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. Starting in 1941 he served as a member of the Military Councils of various fronts, and in 1944 was made Deputy People's Commissar of Defence. He was named Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR in 1947 and from 1947 to 1949 was also Minister of the Armed Forces of the USSR. In 1953-1955 he was Minister of Defence

of the USSR. In 1955-1958 he was Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. From 1948 to 1958 he was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee.

**VORONOV Gennadi** (b. 1910)—A member of the CPSU since 1931, his early career since 1937 was spent doing Party work in Siberia and the Urals. From 1962 to 1971 he was Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation, and from 1971 to 1973, Chairman of the People's Control Committee of the USSR. He was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee from 1961 to 1973.

**VOROSHILOV Kliment** (1881-1969)—A member of the CPSU since 1903, he was one of the organisers and leaders of the Red Army and became a Marshal of the Soviet Union in 1935. In 1925 he was made People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR, and in 1934, People's Commissar of Defence of the USSR. In 1940 he became Vice-Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, and in 1946, Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. In 1953-1960 he held the post of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. He was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee from 1926 to 1960.

**KAGANOVICH Lazar** (b. 1893)—A member of the CPSU since 1911, he served consecutively, starting in 1924, as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine, First Secretary of the Moscow Party Committee, and Chairman of the Party Control Committee under the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) Central Committee. In 1936-1944 he was People's Commissar of Railways and headed a number of industrial ministries. In 1938 he was appointed Vice-Chairman, and in 1953, First Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, a post he held until 1957. He was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the Party Central Committee from 1930 to 1957 (alternate member since 1926).

**MALENKOV Georgi** (1902-1988)—A member of the CPSU since 1920, he was appointed both Secretary of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) Central Committee and Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR in 1939. From 1953 to 1955 he was Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. He was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee from 1946 to 1957 (alternate member since 1941).

**MIKOYAN Anastas** (1895-1978)—A member of the CPSU since 1915. Since 1920 he served consecutively as Secretary of the Nizhny Novgorod Provincial Committee, of the South-Eastern Bureau of the Central Committee, and of the Northern Caucasus Territorial

Committee of the Party. From 1925 to 1946 he headed a number of People's Commissariats while (as of 1937) holding the post of Vice-Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. In 1946 he was made Vice-Chairman and, in 1955, First Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. In 1964-1965 he was Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. He was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee from 1935 to 1966 (alternate member since 1926).

**MOLOTOV (Skryabin) Vyacheslav** (1890-1986)—A member of the CPSU since 1906, he became Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine in 1920 and then Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik). In 1930-1941 he was Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. From 1941 to 1957 he was First Vice-Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. From 1939 to 1949 and again from 1953 to 1956 he was also People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR. He was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee from 1926 to 1957 (alternate member since 1921).

**PASTERNAK Boris** (1890-1960)—Soviet poet, prose writer and translator. The publication of his novel *Doctor Zhivago* abroad became a pretext for his expulsion from the USSR Writers' Union in 1958. The decision was cancelled in 1988 and Pasternak was posthumously restored to membership in the Writers' Union. His novel was published in the Soviet Union in the same year.

**PODGORNY Nikolai** (1903-1983)—A member of the CPSU since 1930, he served as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine from 1957 to 1963. In 1963-1965 he was Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. From 1965 to 1977 he was Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. He was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee from 1960 to 1977 (alternate member since 1958).

**SUSLOV Mikhail** (1902-1982)—A member of the CPSU since 1921, he was made First Secretary of the Stavropol Territorial Committee of the CPSU in 1941. In 1944 he was appointed Chairman of the Bureau of the Party Central Committee for the Lithuanian SSR. From 1947 to 1982 he was Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. He was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee in 1952-1953 and from 1955 to 1982.

**STALIN (Dzhugashvili) Joseph** (1879-1953)—A member of the CPSU since 1898, he served as People's Commissar for Nationalities Affairs from 1917 to 1922 as well as People's Commissar of State Control (as of 1919) and People's Commissar of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate (as of 1920). In 1922 he became General Secretary of the Party Central Committee. In 1941 he also became

Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (the Council of Ministers in 1946-1953) of the USSR. During the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War he was Chairman of the State Defence Committee and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the USSR. He was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee starting from 1919.

**KHRUSHCHEV Nikita** (1894-1971)—A member of the CPSU since 1918, since 1935 he served consecutively as First Secretary of the Moscow Regional and Moscow City Party Committees, First Secretary of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Ukraine. He combined the latter post with that of Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR in 1944-1947. In 1949 he was appointed Secretary of the Central Committee and First Secretary of the Moscow Party Committee. From 1953 to 1964 he was First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, and from 1958 to 1964 he was also Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. He was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee from 1939 to 1964 (alternate member since 1938).

**SHELEPIN Alexander** (b. 1918)—A member of the CPSU since 1940, from 1943 to 1952 he was Secretary and from 1952 to 1958—First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Young Communist League. From 1958 to 1961 he was Chairman of the State Security Committee of the USSR. From 1961 to 1967 he was Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. From 1967 to 1975 he was Chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. He was a member of the Politbureau (Presidium) of the CPSU Central Committee from 1964 to 1975.

ХРУЩЕВ: ЖИЗНЬ И СУДЬБА

*Серия «Публицистика перестройки»*

на английском языке

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